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PHOTO SERIES NO. 57

GRADING AND PACKAGING OF POULTRY

OCTOBER 1961

The continued financial success of any poultry processing plant depends not only upon the preparation of high-quality birds, but also upon whether the birds are uniformly graded for quality and attractively placed in a package. The trend toward marketing poultry on the basis of USDA grades in recent years has been accelerated primarily because many more retailers have begun selling only Federally-inspected and graded poultry and poultry parts. These photographs, showing some of the activities involved in the grading and packaging of poultry, were taken for USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.



N-40606--Prior to packaging, a USDA grader sorts eviscerated chickens for quality. Birds are designated as U.S. Grade A, B, or C, in accordance with USDA standards. To enable grader to readily view both sides of the bird, a mirror is used.



N-36273--In examining poultry on the conveyer line, the USDA grader must evaluate the carcass at a glance, keeping in mind each of the quality factors.



N-40616--Turkey grading is performed on a moving belt. "A Quality" birds remain on the packaging line, while birds of lower qualities are rerouted.

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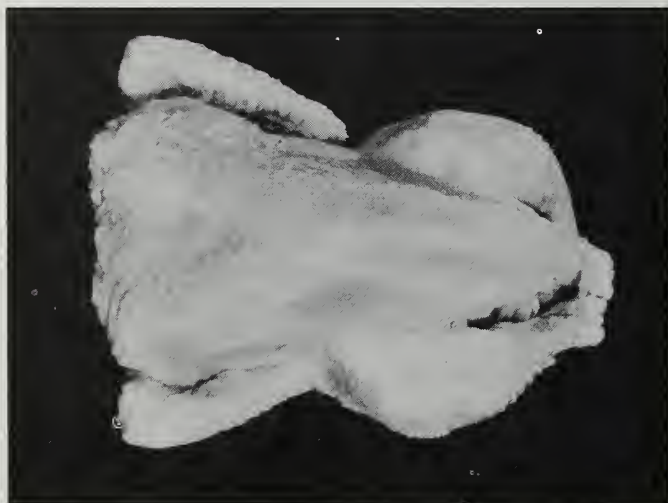
N-40605--USDA grader examines chicken parts for quality factors. Careful examination of individual parts assures quality uniformity in poultry packaged as such.



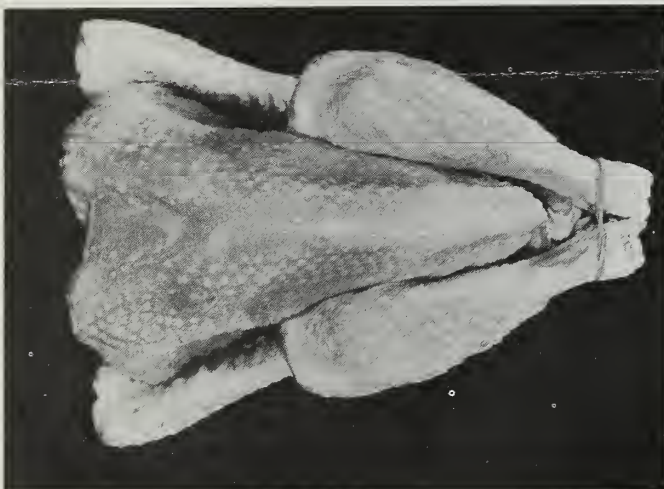
N-40612--Following grading, "A Quality" turkeys remain on the conveyer belt for packaging. Birds of lower qualities are rerouted.



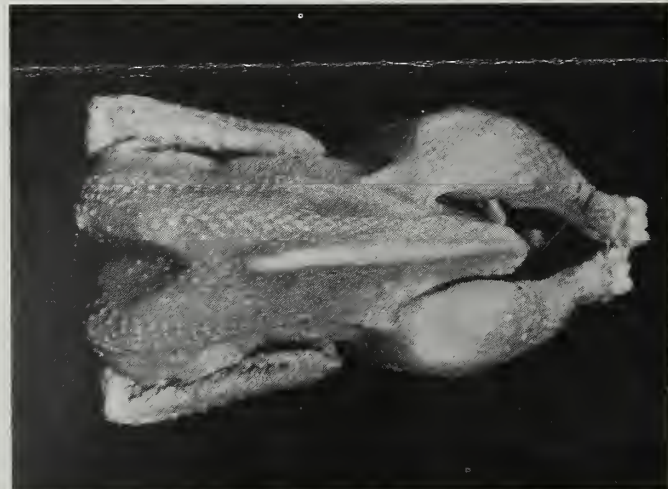
N-40602--Eviscerated chickens grading "A Quality" and left on the conveyer line are removed to a moving belt at this point for bagging in a plastic film.



N-17183--Poultry bearing the "A Quality" grade mark is the ultimate in quality. This U.S. Grade A young chicken is full-fleshed and "meaty," and it has a good layer of fat and a broad, full breast.



N-17184--U.S. Grade B poultry is still of good table quality. This "B Quality" young chicken has slightly less meatiness and fat than the U.S. Grade A bird, however, and it may have minor tears and bruises. It may have a few scattered pinfeathers, and its shape may be a little less desirable than that of the "A" bird.



N-20807--U.S. Grade C poultry is sometimes an economical buy. This "C Quality" young chicken may be poorly fleshed and poorly covered with fat. Its bones may be broken or crooked and its skin may have cuts, tears, and bruises.



N-36223--Employee attaches label to crate containing whole frying chickens to be shipped in fresh chilled form. The label specifies the USDA grade, the class of poultry, the number of birds, the net weight, and other important information. Much of the commercially processed crop of young chickens is marketed in the fresh chilled form.



N-40604--In packaging chickens to be quick-frozen, air is exhausted from the plastic bag containing the whole bird, the end of the bag is tied, and, at this station, the excess of the bag end is cut and dropped into a plastic container.



N-40617--In packaging turkeys, a vacuum draws air from the bag before sealing. Wrinkles in the bag will be removed after sealing by a hot water dip.



N-40618--This machine attaches a metal seal to the bag containing the turkey and cuts off the bag's loose end. Wrinkles in the bag will be removed by shrinking the film in a hot water dip.



N-40607--USDA grader checks packaged frying chickens coming from automatic hot water package shrinking equipment. Hot water shrinks plastic bag to remove wrinkles and air pockets surrounding the product.



N-40619--A momentary dip in hot water shrinks the plastic film surrounding turkeys to remove air pockets and wrinkles.



N-40610--USDA grader examines final packaging. Proper and neat packaging is important for consumer acceptance.



N-40609--Packaged chickens reach the end of the moving belt, where each is examined for torn or broken bags before going into the liquid freeze tank. The examination is made to prevent entry of the freezing fluid into bags.



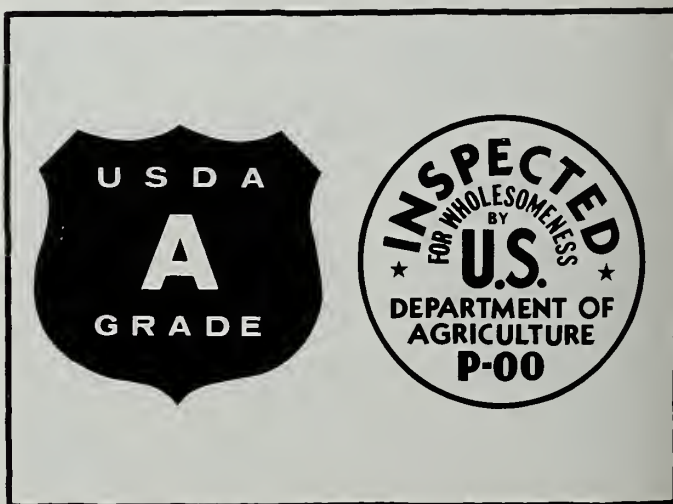
N-40621--These graded and packaged turkeys have just been subjected to a liquid freeze and are packed six to a box for movement to a freezer holding room. The majority of commercially processed turkeys are marketed in frozen, whole carcass form.



N-39941--This consumer need not rely on her own judgment in selecting the quality of poultry she desires. The USDA grade mark on this film-wrapped whole chicken identifies the officially-determined quality of the bird.



N-39940--Poultry parts are especially popular in these days of convenience foods. Consumers may buy packages of individual parts which have been identified with the proper USDA grade mark.



The USDA grade shield (BN-4293, left) denotes that the product has been graded for quality, while the inspection mark (BN-5512, right) indicates that it has been inspected and passed as wholesome food. Only poultry that has been inspected for wholesomeness may bear the USDA grade mark.